



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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DOUGLAS E. HOWARD, Director

News Release

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Bridging the Community through Youth New Juvenile Justice program in Allendale

Allendale - Bridging the Community through Youth, is a new program that the Allendale Charter Township is implementing to prevent juvenile delinquency.

Family Independence Agency (FIA) director Douglas Howard today announced release of a federal grant to Allendale Charter Township totaling \$100,000 for its Allendale Bridging the Community through Youth program. The funds, released through FIA, will be matched by \$50,000 in cash and in-kind resources from the township of Allendale, Allendale Christian School, and Allendale Public Schools. This is the first year of a four-year grant to support this program.

The program, funded under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, was developed by the ABC Coalition (Allendale Bridging the Community). The 21-member group made up of individuals from township government, local service agencies, schools, churches, and Ottawa County Health and Sheriff's departments developed a risk and resource assessment for the community and a plan for proactively addressing problem behaviors in youth.

The assessment, conducted by Patricia and Paul Stephenson professors at Grand Valley State University, found a need to address alcohol and drug use by teens, teen alienation and rebelliousness, and safety concerns. Based on this assessment, the Allendale Bridging the Community through Youth program will target youth, ages 7-17, and families throughout Allendale Charter Township who could benefit from programming to address these needs.



JOHN ENGLER, Governor

In the first year, the program hopes to involve 400-500 young people and at least 50 families in its programs.

"Through these funds, the Allendale community will start a network of prevention programs to reduce the number of youth at risk for juvenile delinquency," said Howard.

Together, the coalition developed a program to help local youth resist alcohol and drug use, build self-esteem, and reduce safety concerns.

Overall prevention objectives include:

- Developing a coordinated program of youth activities through the hiring of a Youth Program Coordinator.
- Providing family therapy for parents and children needing assistance in communication and positive decision-making.
- Developing a safe and nurturing climate for Allendale youth through community policing efforts, safety programs, and community planning.
- Providing expanded social skill and drug prevention education programs in the schools.
- The program is designed to provide summer and after-school activities for positive use of leisure time. These programs will stress positive decision making and healthy social activities.

"This grant process has pulled community members and service agencies together in a common effort supporting positive youth development," said Dan Jonker, project director and ABC Coalition member. "The ABC Coalition looks forward to the results of this grant program in enabling young people to make positive choices."

The new program is one of 30 delinquency prevention programs funded by the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice, an independent unit within the FIA. William G. Hegarty, formerly chief of the Grand Rapids Police Department, serves as the Chair. Its 21 members are appointed by the Governor to provide policy direction under the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act that provides funding which is administered through the Family Independence Agency. These programs address one or more adolescent problem areas of delinquency, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, school dropout, and violence.

"The Allendale community came together to assess community risks and resources, to strengthen protective factors, and to promote assets for children and youth through a collaborative process," said Hegarty. "Community and school leadership is key to positive youth development."

For more information about the program, please contact Angela Barksdale, Youth Program Coordinator, (616) 895-6295, extension 31.

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